

## ARTICLES

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# THE POLITICS OF TRAVEL

## IS TOURISM JUST COLONIALISM IN ANOTHER GUISE?

### DAVID NICHOLSON-LORD

"Of all noxious animals too the most noxious is a tourist. And of all tourists the most vulgar, ill-bred, offensive and loathsome is the British tourist." Thus the Rev. Francis Kilvert, clergyman, diarist and snob, writing in his journal a few days before Easter 1870, after an encounter in the lonely ruins of Llanthony Abbey in Wales. Update the language, change a few of the local details—for "British," for instance, read Japanese or American or German—and you have a comment that is as relevant, and as redolent, now as it was nearly 130 years ago in a remote valley among the Welsh hills.

A tourist, usually, is somebody else. Kilvert, whose diary as a country curate is now regarded as a small classic of English literature, was visiting the abbey himself, on a twenty-five-mile walk with a friend, but failed to see that this might qualify him for the detested designation. As for the behavior that occasioned his horror, it seems pretty mild by today's standards—the people he later execrated were "postured among the ruins in an attitude of admiration, one of them of course discoursing learnedly to his gaping companion and pointing out objects of interest with his stick."

It was the stick, apparently, that did it. "If there is one thing more hateful than another," the curate fulminated into his journal that night, "it is being told what to admire and having objects pointed out to one with a stick." Later that summer, the paradox sharpens almost unbearably, as Kilvert turns incontrovertibly into a tourist—he goes on holiday to Land's End in Cornwall, the westernmost tip of England—yet the excoriation grows more intense. Tourists are "beasts" and "rabble"; they are loud, rude and insolent, "grinning like dogs." A good kicking, he surmises, might make them "mind their manners."

A proper history of tourism would contain many fascinating digressions, not least into iconography. For a nineteenth-century

parson, a stick sufficed as the telltale emblem of the tourist. Today we're more eclectic—anything from a video camera to a loud and silly shirt will do. It would also have much to say

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about xenophobia, snobbery, racial prejudice and parochialism, all of which have colored human attitudes toward strangers—and tourists tend to be strangers en masse. But perhaps its most difficult task would be to decide at what point travel, which is an ageless phenomenon (and, some would argue, a more honorable one), turned into tourism, and, more important, whether it's possible to turn back the clock.

That mass tourism is a distinctively modern phenomenon is incontestable, and one of the main reasons is sheer scale. True, holidays are as old as cities and civilization—the Romans had their villas in the Bay of Naples, the Greeks hosted visitors to the Olympic Games. True, again, large-

scale movements of people have occurred before in history and for reasons that bear some comparison with today's packaged pleasures. Many people, for example, have likened modern tourism to a form of secular pilgrimage—a search for what Abraham Maslow, the psychologist of self-actualization, would have called a "peak experience," but without the paraphernalia of transcendence.

But consider the statistics. A pre-industrial pilgrim in Europe, if he was feeling particularly fervent, might have taken part in one of the

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MATTHEW KLEIN

crusades launched by the papacy to "rescue" the holy places of Christianity from the Islamic infidel. Yet a mere 100,000 people went on the First Crusade in 1096, and there were only seven more in the next 200 years. Now around half a billion people take international holidays every year, and the World Tourism Organization has estimated that this could rise to 650 million by the end of the millennium, with four or five times as many traveling inside their own countries. That's a total of 3 billion people, roughly half the world's current population, on the move in any one year.

What's more, it's happened remarkably quickly. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the tradition of the "Grand Tour" took the leisured and moneyed classes of the richer countries—first England, then, increasingly, the United States—on a long cultural journey around the sights of Europe. In 1841 Thomas Cook sold tickets for a train ride from Leicester, in the English Midlands, to nearby Loughborough, and is supposed thereby to have organized the first tourist excursion; by 1855 he was organizing "inclusive tours" to the Paris Exhibition. In the United States at the same time, American Express—founded by, among others, Henry Wells and William Fargo—introduced money orders and traveler's checks. Even so, before 1939, only a million people traveled abroad each year.

Now, it seems, the whole world wants to be a tourist—and the potential for growth is both staggering and frightening. In Japan, for instance, the government has encouraged people to travel abroad as a way of reducing friction over its trade surplus. In 1965 only 159,000 Japanese people traveled overseas. In 1986 Japan launched its "10 million" plan, aimed at sending that many people abroad annually by 1990 (it succeeded). Until the early nineties, around 80 percent of international travel involved people from only twenty countries—less than a tenth of the world's total. Yet one of the clearest lessons of modern tourism is that it is a facet of "development." In other words, the richer people get, the more they want to travel.

Modern mass tourism also differs from its antecedents in that it has been industrialized. From the cheap charter flights and the itemized itineraries to the packaging of experiences in that curious new literary *oeuvre*, the travel brochure, it is a production line, with all the appurtenances of high volume, standardized lines, quality control and mass marketing. Even by its proponents, it is routinely designated, nowadays, as an "industry"—the second biggest in the world, many say. And in the travel agencies that now throng the shopping malls of Western cities, the cultures, peoples and landscapes that form its raw material are laid out on shelves like products in a supermarket. Social historians of a Marxist bent might call this "commodification." However one travels nowadays, it's difficult to avoid the feeling of being a unit in somebody else's business plan. Even small companies offering personalized wilderness experiences occupy what analysts call a "niche" market.

The difference is that tourism was supposed to be a "smokeless" industry. It was this belief that underpinned its growth after

World War II, when the World Bank, abetted by a new U.N. agency, the World Tourism Organization, prescribed it for Third World countries whose main marketable asset appeared to be "unspoiled" cultures and environments. Tourism, it was argued, would be a passport to development—a clean, green industry with lots of jobs and no factories or fumes.

There were loftier aspirations too—for instance, that travel broadened the mind. After all, the Grand Tour was a form of education, a search among classical cultures for knowledge and enlightenment. Wasn't it St. Augustine who wrote "The world is a book; he who stays at home reads only one page"?

And in the aftermath of war, the notion of promoting international understanding by meeting other peoples had a potency we now find difficult to grasp. Yet there it was, enshrined in the motto of the Hilton hotel chain—"world peace through world travel," a motto endorsed by the likes of John F. Kennedy and Pope John Paul II.

Nowadays we're more cynical. We know that tourism, for a lot of people, is about the "four S's"—sun, sea, sand and sex. All many of us want to do on holiday is ensconce ourselves on a pool-side lounge against a scenic backdrop of palm trees and consume daiquiris by the gallonful in an attempt to recover from the mind-numbing ravages of our work schedules. And even if we're a little more active, or adventurous, or curious, we're aware of the awkwardnesses of travel, particularly in Third World countries—not so much the lack of the material comforts we're used to in the West but the question of how we relate to people whose ranking in the hierarchy of affluence and development is clearly so different from ours.

Do we, for example, ignore beggars or open our purses and throw money at them? Do we worry that the exotic piece of folklore we're watching is about as genuine as the bottle of Coke in our hands? Do we ever wonder what we're doing there—wandering through the world in search of the wild when, with our sunglasses, our cameras and our evident opulence, we're walking advertisements for a culture that is destroying wilderness? The anthropologists of tourism, who have grown increasingly numerous in recent years, have invented a number of intriguing terms to describe such interactions, ranging from "dissonance" to "asymmetry." The Sa people of Vanuatu, in the southern Pacific, have another, less complimentary, label. They call tourists *aisalsaliri*, or "floating ones"—people without place and the power of tradition that comes from place.

It's probable, though, that we in the West have awakened somewhat late to the downside of tourism because for most of the postwar decades we have been riding contentedly on its upside. Global opposition to it began to crystallize in 1980, at a conference in Manila convened by religious leaders in developing countries worried about the impact of tourism on local cultures. This led, first, to the surprisingly categorical statement that "tourism does more harm than good to people and to societies of the Third World"—the so-called Manila statement—and second, to the founding of the Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism, still the main international pressure group.

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According to Dr. Koson Srisang, former executive secretary of the coalition, tourism as currently practiced "does not benefit the majority of people. Instead it exploits them, pollutes the environment, destroys the ecosystem, bastardises the culture, robs people of their traditional values and ways of life and subjugates women and children in the abject slavery of prostitution.... [It] epitomizes the present unjust world economic order where the few who control wealth and power dictate the terms."

There are several compelling reasons for such statements. First, tourism is far from being a clear-cut economic success story, although it is undeniably big business, accounting for about an eighth of the world's gross national product and in some countries propping up the national economy. In purely financial terms the United States is the world's biggest generator and beneficiary of tourism, accounting for around 15 percent of total spending; but the United States would not go broke if tourists stopped coming. Countries like the Bahamas, where tourism makes up more than half of G.N.P. and an estimated 35 percent of employment, probably would. But that is the exception rather than the rule, and even such cases do not tell the whole story.

Worldwide, tourism is a low-wage industry. For poor people, low wages may be better than no wages at all—but it's a moot point. It depends, for example, on what alternatives they have, and sometimes people have no alternative because the government, in pursuit of a national tourism strategy, has moved them off their land or destroyed it to make way for beach resorts or holiday complexes or even golf courses.

osing your land—earning a salary for a living instead of growing your own food or fishing for it in the lagoon—is a route of forced entry into the global cash economy, where, as a poor person in a poor country, the odds are stacked heavily against you. Money is the only currency the global economy understands—not the food you grew or the fish you caught, not even the quality of life you may have enjoyed before the government built that golf course. And without money (and the job that brings it) you are trapped: There's no escape because your land, and the old way of life, has gone. In a sense, therefore,

tourism destroys jobs because it helps drive people off the land and into the unemployment statistics. A better way of expressing this might be to say that it destroys livelihoods. The result is lots of people in the twilight zone of the cash economy, begging and touting.

This, of course, is one of the grand themes of postwar global economic development, and tourism is a culprit only because it is one of the main engines of development. Surely, one might argue, poor people want to be part of the new global economy because that's the only way they can get to buy the televisions and video cameras and air-conditioning systems that are such a vital component of the Good Life, as advertised worldwide by Coca-Cola, McDonald's, *Melrose Place* and *Baywatch*. In vain do we tell them that the Good Life is not as good as it's cracked up to

be. It can't be too bad, they reason—it's got you halfway around the world.

Ultimately, the argument about which way of life is better—theirs or ours—is unanswerable: Both have much to commend them, and if we had a second go at development in the West, we'd probably try to do things differently. But it's undeniable that the international failure over the past two decades of "trickle-down" economics is truer of tourism than of most other forms of economic activity. The technical term used is "leakage," and what it means is that much of the financial benefit of tourism leaks out of the host country, usually into the hands of big business, and precious little of it leaks down to local people who suffer most of the backwash.

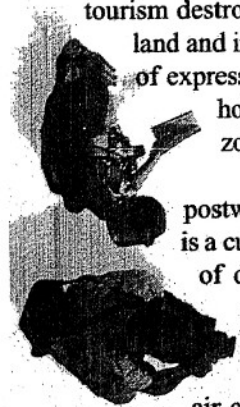
*Tourism risks becoming as exploitative as mining and manufacturing in destroying landscapes before moving on to fresh, 'unspoiled' areas.*

Worldwide, for example, the hotel business is dominated by U.S. multinationals that account for thirteen of the top twenty operators—companies such as Holiday Inn and Best Western. In some Caribbean countries, up to 80 percent of the nominal inflows of foreign currency flow straight out again, into the hands of airlines, tour operators and travel agents. Figures of 70 percent leakage have been estimated for a beach holiday in Kenya, 77 percent for charter operations in Gambia and 60 percent for Thailand. The World Bank has reported that in some countries as little as 10 cents out of every dollar spent goes to local people. In Bali, where 200 people—an entire village—perform the Kechak dance for visitors, one study found that a group of tourists paid \$250 in entrance fees to operators but

the village received only \$20—10 cents per performer. On top of this, tax breaks and subsidies for hotel chains and developers mean that the poorest people often end up subsidizing the holidays of the richest—and in the process a new "one crop" economy is born, vulnerable to the whims of Western consumerism and the financial dictates of tour operators.

Tourism thus risks becoming as exploitative an industry in its way as mining and manufacturing—destroying landscapes through overdevelopment, pollution or the sheer attrition of numbers before moving on to fresh, new "unspoiled" areas. It's the slash-and-burn of prehistoric hunter-gatherers but on a global scale, leaving behind once-beautiful coastlines now ringed in concrete and fronted with highrise hotels and apartment blocks—from Florida to Goa, from the Mediterranean coast of Spain, France, Italy and Turkey to the beach resorts of Bali. In the Mediterranean, the resident coastal population of 130 million doubles in the summer—a U.N. study has predicted that 95 percent of the coast could be developed within thirty years.

Tourism has seriously damaged fragile ecosystems like the Alps, the winter skiing playground of Europe, and the trekking areas of the Himalayas. Worldwide, it poses a serious threat to coastal habitats like dunes, mangrove forests and coral reefs. It fuels a booming and usually illegal trade in the products of threatened wildlife, from tortoiseshell and coral to ivory. Its "consumers" inevitably bring their habits and expectations with them—whether it's hot showers and flush toilets or well-watered greens for golfers. In the Himalayas, showers for trekkers often



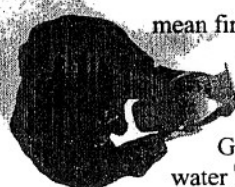
## CUSTOMS IN TRAVELING

Instead of the usual fluff list of "vacation reading," we here-with provide a list of books and related materials *not* to take with you on your travels, depending on where you go. We do not pretend that the list is definitive or exhaustive. Rather, it is based on customs regulations (which do not, for example, tell you that Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* is banned in all Muslim countries), but we trust that travelers, especially fellow travelers, will find it helpful nonetheless.

Did you know, for example, that in Albania you are prohibited from bringing in Bibles or Korans except for personal use; that in Argentina you can't bring in "anti-Semitic material"; that Australia excludes materials that are "blasphemous, indecent or obscene or that unduly emphasize matters of sex, horror, violence or crime"; that Bahrain, Bali and Budapest prohibit "pornography" (as does Jordan); that Belgium provides a lengthy list of "immoral publications"? China seizes "printed material detrimental to the politics, economy, culture or ethics of the People's Republic of China," and you can be fined for bringing in certain religious materials. Cuba bans "pornography, morally offensive material"; Egypt simply seizes what it doesn't like; Indonesia not only prohibits pornography but also "printed matter in Chinese characters" and "all Communist, Marxist and Leninist publications." Iran presumably excludes so much that it puts nothing in print to limit itself. In Israel the censor may prohibit any publication seen "likely to become prejudicial for the defense of [Israel] or to the public safety or to public order." Italy seizes advertising materials; Japan has confiscated *Playboy*; Kenya excludes "anti-government" materials; Kuwait ranks porn and religious material with pork products and alcohol. Malaysia's minister of information can ban anything he sees as unfit, including "Zionist" literature.

In North Korea, Oman, the Philippines or Russia, "obscene" and "pornographic" can mean hard-core porn or photography magazines with nude studies; Saudi Arabia has seized or altered even magazines like *Good Housekeeping* with a cover sporting Goldie Hawn with a shoulder exposed. South Africa has confiscated "indecent, obscene or objectionable" goods; Turkey has pulped Western atlases and the Encyclopedia Britannica. And don't try to bring *Penthouse* into Singapore, or "materials that are racist, pornographic, or anti-Ukrainian" into Ukraine. The U.K. keeps a classified list of excludable "obscene" matter. And, oh yes, the United States, which curiously bans switchblade knives "unless you only have one arm," retains the right to seize "private" books, records, tapes and computer programs infringing U.S. copyright, not to mention Cuban cigars and Iranian rugs. Vietnam prohibits "cultural materials unsuitable to Vietnamese society," which appear to include the movie *Rambo*.

We apologize to countries we have omitted, but the careful traveler can check with the relevant customs office or censor. Happy landing. RESEARCH BY CINDA ELSER



mean firewood, which means deforestation. In Hawaii and Barbados, it was found that each tourist used between six and ten times as much water and electricity as a local. In Goa villagers forced to walk to wells for their water had to watch as a pipeline to a new luxury hotel was built through their land. Over the past decade golf, because of its appetite for land, water and herbicides, has emerged as one of the biggest culprits, so much so that "golf wars" have broken out in parts of Southeast Asia; campaigners in Japan, one of the chief exponents of golf tourism, have launched an annual World No Golf Day.

This is not to say tourism can't do some good—but the cost-benefit equation is complex. Historic monuments, houses and gardens thrive on visitors. Throughout much of the world, but notably in southern and eastern Africa, tourism underpins the survival of wildlife. Why else would small farmers put up with elephants trampling their crops? Whale watching is now a bigger business than whaling. In the uplands of Rwanda, known to millions through the film *Gorillas in the Mist*, the mountain gorilla's salvation lies partly in the income and interest generated by tourists visiting in small groups. In Kenya a lion's worth is estimated at \$7,000 a year in tourist income—for an elephant herd the figure is \$610,000. And if large animals, with large ranges, are protected, then so are their habitats—the national parks.

Yet none of these gains are unqualified. To get to see your whales and your gorillas, for example, you have to travel, by car, coach or plane. Each time you do so you're effectively setting fire to a small reservoir of gasoline—and releasing several roomfuls of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Transport is the world's fastest growing source of carbon dioxide emissions; leisure travel accounts for half of all transport; and Americans, the most peripatetic of the planet's residents, are responsible for puffing more than five tons of carbon each into the atmosphere every year. That's nearly 107.4 times the rate of the stay-at-home Bangladeshis. The cumulative result of such activity is one of the biggest disruptions in the Earth's history—global warming, climate change and rising seas. And it's the low-lying Bangladeshis who will suffer most from it.

And then there are those "pristine" habitats—the national parks. In many cases, parks remain pristine because the people who used to live there have been thrown out—the Masai in Kenya are perhaps the best-known example, but there are many more, particularly in India and South Africa. Many important historic sites have also been irrevocably altered by the scale of human presence. In the fifties, for instance, during the full moon, it was possible to stroll around the Parthenon in Athens until midnight, with only a night watchman for company. Now, as in many other places—Stonehenge in Britain, for example—that's not allowed. In Venice, a city of 360,000, there are 100,000 daily visitors on average. Ten years ago, for the first time, the inevitable happened—the city became so crowded they had to close it to the mainland.

Such pressures breed a phenomenon, often referred to as "Disneyfication," in which culture and history are insensibly transformed into "heritage," the authentic giving way to replicas and experience "themed" before it can be understood. This



comes in various guises. In Hawaii it is known as "Hula marketing" or "Aloha for Sale." In Thailand, the remnants of primitive hunter-gatherer tribes, now mainly confined to squalid settlements in international resorts like Phuket, enact, for cash, elements of their traditional culture that they have long since been forced to abandon—killing pigs, diving for shells, shooting blowpipes. The tribespeople wear Western clothing nowadays—but for the performances, the old jungle g-strings are often de rigueur. In the seventies, the American anthropologist Dean MacCannell coined the phrase "staged authenticity" to describe such events and thereby opened up a rich new seam of research (see Graham Boynton, next page).

Some observers now argue that tourism can strengthen local cultures by encouraging an awareness of tradition and the ceremonies and festivals that go with it. But what's the value of tradition if it's kept alive self-consciously, for profit, and bears little relation to real life—which, today, across the world, grows ever more uniform? Hence the dismissive references to "human zoos," "airport art" and the trinketization of cultures. These are questions that apply as much to fox hunting in Britain and Carnival in Rio de Janeiro as to so-called cannibal tours in Thailand. What's undeniable is that tourism, in one way or another, changes tradition, and for many people, particularly in the Third World, that change looks and feels like degradation.

Part of the problem is that tourism is colonialism in another guise—economic rather than political. Hence it rubs hard against the growing worldwide movement for local or national self-determination. But there are also some profound and often irreconcilable differences in perception.

What makes people want to travel? The short answer centers on the concept of escape. According to Jost Krippendorf, the Swiss academic who is one of the leading authorities on modern tourism, people travel because "they no longer feel happy where they are—where they work, where they live. They feel the monotony of the daily routine, the cold rationality of factories, offices, apartment blocks and transport, shrinking human contact... the loss of nature and naturalness." MacCannell argues that mass tourism is a product of the "most depersonalized" epoch in history.

Well, maybe. It's true that people with gardens, or those who live in small towns, take fewer holidays than apartment-block residents or city dwellers. It's probably also true that what we casually refer to as the "pressures of daily life"—work, family, commuting—are more intense, in some respects, than ever before. Yet people have always felt a desire for something more than their life routinely offers them—something, well, different. It's partly because humans are naturally inquisitive and exploratory but also, and more significant, because we need the unknown, what historians of religion call "otherness," to lend our lives significance. So we conceive of ideal worlds—

Paradise, the Golden Age, Heaven, Atlantis, Shangri-La—and dream, sometimes, of attaining them.

Modern tourism routinely, and often shamelessly, exploits such myths, as the most casual glance through just about any brochure will attest. It is ably assisted by the travel-writing business, which, while purporting to be independent, is actually part of the marketing operation, complete with writers who depend for their livelihoods on the tour or resort operators. Millions of people are thus launched yearly on a quest for paradise, or a voyage of self-discovery, into the midst of millions of others going about their daily business. Visions of reality collide, often resoundingly, which helps to explain why tourists have been shot in Egypt and pelted with cow dung and rotten fish in Goa and why many natives of Hawaii—one of the archetypal tropical island "paradises"—want a boycott of tourism, describing it as "the plague" suffered by a "historically oppressed people."

Faced with such responses, and with evidence of growing dissatisfaction, and unease, from its most discerning markets at home, the tourist industry has in the nineties made some attempts at reform. Voluntary schemes such as Green Globe and the International Hotels Environment Initiative exhort us to shower rather than bathe, to confine ourselves to a single towel. Many tour operators have adopted environmental guidelines. We now have green or "eco" tourism, supposedly a small-scale, environmentally friendly alternative to the mass version. In 1995 the first U.N.-sponsored World Conference on Sustainable Tourism was

staged; government and industry representatives from more than 150 countries turned up. More of us, it seems, are aware of the problem, and want to do the right thing. One poll by the World Trade Organization showed that 85 percent of German tourists want an "environmentally correct" holiday. Forty percent of Americans are said to be interested in "life enhancing," as opposed to "sun seeking," travel.

By themselves, however, good intentions are not enough. Eco-tourism, for example, has been caricatured, with justice, as "ego-tourism"—a smug, up-market restyling of the same old model. Supposedly independent travelers, it is argued, priding themselves on their initiative and their individuality, are merely tourists in mufti—they're still rich (relatively), alien and passing through. And why, when both have roughly similar effects, should "life enhancing" travel be regarded as superior to the sun-seeking version? At least the latter is honest about its motives.

In truth, there are no easy answers to the dilemmas posed by mass tourism. Awareness, certainly, is a step forward—the knowledge of what it means to be a tourist. With that comes the ability to make better choices, where and how and even whether to travel. An increasing number of nonprofit organizations offer working holidays, in which the economic and social asymmetries that lie at the heart of the holiday industry are somewhat redressed. The tourist takes but also gives. Among the best-known is the environmental research organization Earthwatch.

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Such initiatives are undoubtedly one of the ways forward for tourism. The world, clearly, is not going to stop taking holidays—but equally clearly we can no longer afford to ignore the consequences. And if one of the major culprits has been the

industrialization of travel, a genuinely postindustrial tourism, with the emphasis on people and places rather than product and profits, could turn out to be significantly more planet-friendly. ■

## THE SEARCH FOR AUTHENTICITY ON DESTROYING THE VILLAGE IN ORDER TO SAVE IT

### GRAHAM BOYNTON

*The use of traveling is to regulate imagination by reality, and instead of thinking how things may be, to see them as they are.*

—Samuel Johnson

Exploring that fine distinction, evoked by Samuel Johnson more than 200 years ago, is still the essence of travel. In Dr. Johnson's day, travel as a romantic quest was accessible to only an elite few, whose exchanges with foreign cultures were infrequent enough to leave little impact upon them. Today, however, in the age of high-impact tourism, it is increasingly difficult to know what is real and what is not. If travel is primarily about discovery—and even in this era of mass tourism that is cited as the main reason Americans travel abroad—then the disappearance of things to discover creates a major problem for both the industry and its clients.

The travel industry has of late come to recognize this, and through the nineties has been developing a market segment that many see as the potential savior of diversity and authenticity on our planet, or at least what is left of it. Broadly defined as eco-tourism, this is based on the belief that threatened habitats and disappearing cultures will survive only if they are economically viable. Indeed, countries such as Costa Rica, Ecuador, Brazil, Kenya and South Africa have staked their reputations as tourist draws on the pristine quality of their preserved environments; thus, ironically, the tourism industry that is helping ruin the planet with one hand is with the other helping to save it.

In Africa, most notably, the past decade has seen sustainable eco-tourism projects mushrooming, and while a handful are showing great promise others are raising a whole new set of questions about what is and what isn't authentic. Earlier this year I spent a month in Africa studying eco-tourism programs in Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe and found success and failure in equal proportions. In Zimbabwe's remote northeastern bushveld, the Shangaan tribe has, under the aegis of Clive Stockil, a white farmer and conservationist, created a model sustainable utilization project. The tribe had been thrown off its traditional lands during the colonial era when the white government sectioned off parts of the country as national wildlife reserves for wealthy foreign tourists and declared all the animals "royal game," the property of the British crown. At the stroke of a pen people who had lived for centuries among the animals, and

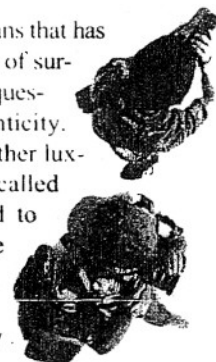
depended on them for survival, were transformed into poachers.

The Shangaans applied faultless logic to their predicament, arguing that if there were no animals there would be no tourists, and if there were no tourists then the government may as well give them their lands back. So they joined in a poaching campaign that, through the eighties, all but wiped out the elephant and rhino populations in the area. Only when Stockil arrived at the end of the decade with a proposal for a communal tourism project and a promise that they would once more benefit from the wild animals did they desist.

Now, ten years on, revenue from tourism and hunting safaris has helped build a school, attended by some forty children from the surrounding area, and two grinding mills, while construction has begun on a model village that will allow small groups of foreign visitors to live among the Shangaans. According to Stockil, the community "has the potential over the next five years to start generating \$1 million annually."

Some 2,000 miles to the southwest of the Shangaans, another endangered African community is also relying on eco-tourism to halt its rapid trajectory toward extinction. The Bushmen—a term invented by white settlers and other tribes to describe the yellow-skinned clans of hunter-gatherers who had inhabited this southwestern corner of Africa long before the arrival of others—are down to a few tens of thousands, living in squalid communities around the Kalahari Desert, as far north as the Tsodilo Hills in Botswana and as far south as the Sederberg Mountains in South Africa's Western Cape. Once proud, independent, spiritual people whose knowledge and understanding of the natural world made them ideal tenants of this wilderness, they've been pushed to the fringes of modern society and reduced to stoned-out no-hopers.

Again, it is the intervention of white Africans that has given some Bushmen communities a chance of survival, but in doing so they have raised big questions about preservation and cultural authenticity. A benevolent Afrikaans farmer set up the rather luxurious resort in the Sederberg Mountains called Kaggga Kamma, where tourists are invited to wander around the model Bushman village and watch as the occupants, dressed in animal skins, go about their centuries-old ways. The forty or so Kaggga Kamma Bushmen actually live in tin or wattle-and-daub huts out of the



Graham Boynton is the author of *Last Days in Cloud Cuckooland: Dispatches From White Africa*, published this month by Random House.